

The Gateway Academy

Marshfoot Road, Grays, Essex RM16 4LU

Inspection dates

27–28 March 2019

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- School leaders and the multi-academy trust (MAT) have worked together effectively to provide a clear direction for the school, which has led to strong improvements.
- Leaders have an accurate picture of what the school does well, and where further improvements are required.
- Leaders rigorously monitor the quality of teaching and learning to ensure that it meets pupils' needs.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and tailored to meet individual needs. It promotes positive attitudes to learning. The curriculum is supported by a wide range of visits and extra-curricular activities to stimulate engagement.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved. Some teaching is of the highest quality. Current pupils are making good progress in a range of subjects.
- Staff morale is high because of the strong support they receive from leaders.
- Learning support assistants contribute well in lessons and make sure that all pupils understand their tasks.
- Pupils behave well. They are polite and courteous to adults and their peers. Bullying is not common, and when it does occur it is dealt with swiftly.
- Pupils' enjoyment of school life is reflected in their punctuality and regular attendance.
- Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education or employment.
- Parents are highly supportive of the school. They appreciate the quality of education and care that the school provides for their children.
- Differences in the performance of disadvantaged pupils compared to other pupils nationally are diminishing. Leaders recognise that more needs to be done to ensure that improvements are made at a faster rate.
- Leaders' plans for improvement lack precise arrangements for checking actions to ensure that they are making a genuine difference to pupils' outcomes.
- Leaders do not focus sharply enough on the progress pupils make across the broader curriculum.
- Teachers in lessons other than English do not plan enough opportunities for pupils to use the spoken word to express their ideas.
- Standards in science are not yet as good as those found in other subjects.
- Not all teachers apply the assessment and marking policy consistently.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership and management, by:
 - sharpening the school development plan with clear milestones to check that priorities for improvement are dealt with effectively
 - developing a sharper focus on the progress pupils make across the curriculum.
- Improve the quality of teaching, by:
 - providing consistently high-quality teaching in science so that pupils make rapid progress in order to catch up where there are previous gaps in knowledge
 - ensuring that all teaching encourages disadvantaged pupils to make rapid progress so that they can attain the highest standard
 - planning more opportunities for pupils to apply their oracy skills in subjects other than English in order to develop further their confidence and fluency when speaking
 - ensuring that the assessment and marking policy is consistently applied.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The school suffered a decline in its performance in the recent past. Pupils' achievement weakened. The headteacher, working with her senior leadership team, has instigated rapid improvement and is ensuring that the difficulties the school faced are being resolved. Leaders have changed the school's culture and ethos, by raising expectations. Ineffective teaching is no longer tolerated. Pupils' progress has increased.
- The Gateway Learning Community Trust has provided valuable support in raising standards. The trust ensures that the school has the necessary capacity to drive forward further improvements. Despite difficulties in recruitment, the trust continues to 'grow' its own staff and leaders through training and development.
- Leaders are honest in their evaluation of the school. They know what the school does well and what needs improving. They use the school's development plan as a tool to achieve continuing improvement. However, plans for improvement lack milestones to check that identified actions are having an impact.
- Leaders are clear about their specific roles and responsibilities. They follow agreed procedures for monitoring and evaluating the school's work. These procedures are rigorous and systematic. Leaders, in turn, hold subject and pastoral leaders accountable for systematically checking the quality of teaching and the welfare of pupils in their charge.
- Senior leaders hold middle leaders accountable and do not shy away from taking robust measures when necessary. Middle leaders have worked closely with senior leaders to develop a clearer understanding of the standards they should expect from their teams. This is contributing to stronger progress across the curriculum.
- Leaders have prioritised making teaching consistently good. Well-established systems are in place to monitor the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Leaders use a range of information, including lesson observations, learning walks, scrutiny of pupils' work and performance information to identify school improvement priorities.
- The curriculum provides an appropriate breadth of subjects in key stages 3 and 4. It contributes well to pupils' improved attendance and good personal development. The good choice of extra-curricular activities and enrichment activities is broadening pupils' experiences and effectively promoting their well-being.
- Leaders use additional funding and Year 7 catch-up funding to support disadvantaged pupils well. Leaders' evaluations relating to additional funding enable them to determine which strategies have the most effect on accelerating pupils' progress.
- Raising the achievement of disadvantaged pupils remains a priority. Differences in the progress made by disadvantaged pupils compared with others nationally are diminishing but not at a fast enough pace.
- Special educational needs funding is used effectively because the coordinator ensures that pupils' needs are promptly diagnosed. Effective training is provided to all staff, including learning support assistants, and this ensures that most pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make the progress they are capable of.

- Leaders recognise the importance for continuous professional development. Adults at all levels are given opportunities to improve their skills. Teachers acknowledge the improvements in their skills following professional development opportunities.
- Recently qualified teachers feel well supported by school leaders. They value the mentors appointed to oversee their induction and development, and the opportunities to attend training within school.
- Parents are highly supportive of the work the school does. The vast majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's Parent View survey would recommend this school to other parents. Leaders work closely with parents to build good relationships with the school. This is evidenced in the increased attendance at parents' evenings.
- Leaders do not offer precise enough challenge to staff over the progress pupils make.

Governance of the school

- The trust is highly ambitious for the school. Trustees bring a broad range of experience and expertise to their roles. They demonstrate a thorough understanding of their roles and responsibilities, and know the school well.
- The trustees demonstrate a good knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They receive a wide range of information about the school from senior leaders. The trustees know how to interpret this information and question leaders about the school's performance. They challenge the school to constantly improve.
- The trust ensures that safeguarding responsibilities are met.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and accurate. Policies and procedures are kept up to date and adhered to.
- All staff are well trained in all aspects of safeguarding. This includes threats posed to pupils from radicalisation and extremism, and the risks associated with the criminal exploitation of children known as county lines.
- Newly appointed staff receive a thorough induction into safeguarding requirements and quickly approach the level of understanding demonstrated by longer-standing staff. This enables staff to quickly spot concerns and take rapid action with confidence.
- A strong culture of safeguarding permeates the school. There is a shared understanding of the need to protect pupils against all possible risks. Staff, irrespective of their role remain vigilant and keep a watchful eye on each individual. Leaders work closely and effectively with other agencies.
- Pupils are provided with opportunities to develop their understanding of keeping safe, particularly when out of school. For example, they understand the dangers of providing personal information via the internet and mobile phones. Pupils say that they feel safe and secure in school and know who to talk to if they have any worries or concerns.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching is typically good. Teachers have secure subject knowledge that sustains pupils' interest. They explain new ideas clearly. Teachers know their pupils well and have a secure understanding of their needs. This, combined with mutual respect, is ensuring that pupils make good progress from their starting points.
- The calm, purposeful environment seen in many lessons ensures that pupils can work hard and enjoy their learning. Many pupils share their teachers' high aspirations. They want to do well and are keen to participate in activities and complete the work set.
- The quality of teaching in English is improving significantly. In previous years, outcomes have been too low but teachers are now setting more-demanding work. Pupils are responding and rising to the challenge and so making better progress.
- Teaching in mathematics is good. Pupils are making good progress as a result of teachers' high expectations and a clear focus on the development of key skills. Pupils are challenged to think for themselves and advance their learning through a range of stimulating activities.
- Teachers have high expectations and questioning is highly effective. Teachers ask searching questions which probe pupils' understanding. Use of follow-up questions develops pupils' understanding further, enabling pupils to make good progress.
- Teachers encourage pupils to work with positive attitudes so that they learn from their mistakes and are keen to improve. Teachers are skilful at assessing how well pupils are grasping new ideas and intervening at just the right time to clarify a misconception or provide another example to reinforce a key message.
- Learning support assistants are used effectively in lessons, and the special educational needs coordinator works well with learning support assistants to develop their work with individual pupils.
- Teachers work hard to address the additional needs of disadvantaged pupils by ensuring that they are actively involved in lessons and are well supported. These pupils are now making better progress than they have done in the past but progress still needs to improve further.
- Despite the appropriate efforts of the multi-academy trust to recruit and train skilled teachers, there has been a shortage in some subject areas, notably science. Leaders have been resourceful in trying to resolve these issues. Science continues to be less effective than other curriculum areas as pupils are not making rapid enough progress to fill in the gaps from previous weak teaching.
- Opportunities for pupils to apply their oracy skills at length in subjects other than English are more limited. This reduces the pupils' ability to explain and refine ideas verbally in other subject areas.
- Teachers do not always adhere to the school's assessment and feedback policy in order to support pupils to progress in their learning.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils report that they feel safe. They described how, through the school's daily personal and academic development (PAD) sessions, they learn strategies for keeping safe; for example, when using social media. Pupils describe incidents of bullying as rare and are confident that when they do occur swift action is taken by staff to resolve the situation.
- Pupils have the opportunity to raise funds for their local charity, One Community. The strength of the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development ensures that pupils are reflective. This helps them in their preparation to become conscientious citizens.
- Leaders ensure that pupils have a say in decisions which affect them. Those pupils who are members of the student leadership team meet with senior leaders regularly and take pride in their role. They have frequent opportunities to express their opinions and contribute to school life. They are keen to represent the views of their peers.
- The 'big brother' room, designed by the student leadership team is effective in encouraging pupils to share any concerns they may have, of an academic or of a pastoral nature.
- Pupils are supported to develop their confidence and self-esteem by taking part in a range of extra-curricular activities such as rugby, cross-country, basketball, netball, badminton, basketball and trampolining.
- Pupils go on school trips to extend their knowledge of the taught curriculum by visiting for example, the theatre, museums, Sri Lanka and other countries, participating in the First World War battlefields tour and attending university to experience life in further education.
- Careers education is an essential part of the curriculum for all pupils in all year groups. The application of skills and knowledge is emphasised within subjects to ensure that pupils make a connection between what they are learning and their future in terms of further education and employment.
- The few pupils who attend the alternative provision are served well by these arrangements. Pupils are safe, secure and learning well.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils move around the site purposefully and calmly. They take pride in their appearance. Lessons start punctually, with pupils having the right equipment and ready to learn. The vast majority of pupils are polite and respectful to each other and to staff. In lessons, they listen carefully to each other's views and opinions.
- Pupils behaviour at breaktimes and lunchtimes is well ordered. Pupils get on well together. They take care of the school environment, which is tidy and litter free. Staff on duty are highly visible. Staff positively reinforce good behaviour and respond quickly and appropriately when issues arise.

- The attendance of pupils overall is in line with the national average and the attendance of all groups of pupils is an improving trend. This is a result of the assertive work of school leaders in chasing poor attendance, and of the support given to parents by the school's pastoral team.
- The number of exclusions of pupils increased prior to this academic year due to the school's determination to improve standards of behaviour. Higher expectations have been introduced through the new behaviour policy. Far fewer pupils are now excluded from the school than previously.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Inspectors' evaluation of pupils' learning and work show that pupils currently in the school make good progress in a range of subjects.
- In 2016, Year 11 pupils' progress from their starting points at key stage 2 was below average. In 2017 and 2018, Year 11 pupils' progress from their starting points at key stage 2 was broadly in line with the national average, demonstrating significant improvement. High-quality leadership and better teaching secured this improvement.
- Pupils' achievement in English in 2018 was lower than it should have been. Inspection evidence demonstrates that pupils currently in school, especially those in key stage 4, are making better progress. This is due to the improved teaching and support that pupils receive in this subject.
- In 2018, pupils' achievement in mathematics was similar to that of other pupils nationally. Current pupils' progress is good. This is particularly the case in key stage 4. Pupils are responding well to the much-improved quality of teaching, learning and assessment in mathematics.
- Inspection evidence, including scrutiny of work in pupils' books, shows that pupils in all years typically progress well.
- The progress by pupils with SEND is improving because of the impact of leaders on developing tailored provision to support their needs.
- Disadvantaged pupils are now making better progress than previously. Leaders' strategies are beginning to have more impact on the rate of progress of disadvantaged pupils across the school. Staff are aware of these individual pupils' needs, although progress for these pupils is not improving as quickly as it could in some subject areas.
- Although improving overall, progress in science is less strong as there is still a legacy of underachievement to overcome. Work in books demonstrates that learning in science is now improving, but rightly remains a focus for the school.
- The school provides helpful information for pupils about their next steps in education, training or employment. As a result, almost all pupils take their learning further after the age of 16.
- Pupils studying off-site courses attend regularly and make good progress as a result of the effective systems that are in place to support them. Such provision ensures that learners gain qualifications that will enable them to progress to the next stage of their education or training.

School details

Unique reference number	133114
Local authority	Thurrock
Inspection number	10083941

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,023
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Hilary Hodgson
Headteacher	Grainne McLaughlin
Telephone number	01375 489000
Website	www.theglc-gatewayacademy.org.uk
Email address	jo.jones@theglc.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	28–29 March 2017

Information about this school

- The school is part of The Gateway Learning Community Trust.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who receive support for special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan is slightly higher than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below the national average.
- The school makes use of The Thurrock Excellence Trust to provide alternative education for a very small number of pupils.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 41 lessons. These visits were carried out with members of the senior leadership team or with the chief executive officer of The Gateway Learning Community Trust.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior and middle leaders, recently qualified teachers, trainee teachers and four members of the governing body.
- Inspectors met with three groups of pupils and with many other pupils informally around the school.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation including information relating to safeguarding, self-evaluation and improvement planning, records of pupils' behaviour and attendance and other information provided by senior leaders.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work in lessons and conducted a work scrutiny.
- Inspectors considered 66 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, six free-text responses sent by parents and carers, and 112 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for staff. Inspectors considered parents' responses to surveys carried out by the school.
- There were no responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for pupils.

Inspection team

Stefanie Lipinski-Barltrop, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Lynn Ayling	Ofsted Inspector
Sue Pryor	Ofsted Inspector
Brenda Watson	Ofsted Inspector

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